

Know Your Rights - Tenancy in the UK

A 101 on tenant rights to keep your housing fair.



Having a **protected** place to live is important. Whether you're a student or a family, you should have **access to information** that can help you protect yourself against unjust landlords or evictions. That information should be readily available, but it's harder than it should be to find.

We've compiled everything you need to know, including your legal rights and protections and what to do if they're violated. Everyone deserves a safe home, and with this knowledge, you can help protect yours.

As a renter, you have the right to...

1. **Live in a safe property that's in a good state of repair**
2. **Get your deposit back when your tenancy ends (and in some circumstances, have it protected)**
3. **Challenge excessively high charges**
4. **Know who your landlord is**
5. **Live in the property undisturbed**
6. **See an Energy Performance Certification for the property**
7. **Be protected from unfair eviction and excessively high rent**
8. **Have a written agreement if you have a fixed-term tenancy of more than 3 years**
9. **If you have a tenancy agreement, it should be fair and comply with the law**

The Renters' Rights Bill

There are several legal protections in place in the UK that aim to protect tenants from unlawful practices. The **Renters' Rights Bill**, due to come into effect in 2025, is one of them. It's expected to be final between **July and October**.

Here's what it promises to do:

- **Abolish Section 21 or "no fault" evictions.**

The Section 21 notice allowed landlords to give tenants documents that start the legal process of ending a tenancy (or, an eviction - where a person is forced to move out of their property). They didn't need to have a reason to do this. Once the bill is in effect, that won't be allowed anymore.

- **Make sure possession grounds are fair to both tenants and landlords.**

This bill will introduce new safety measures for tenants. It wants to give them more time to find a new, safe home if they get evicted. It will also make sure landlords can't use their grounds for the wrong things.

- **Provide stronger protections against backdoor eviction.**

Tenants will be able to appeal excessively high rents that are designed to force them out. Say your rent rises by 50% in one go - this bill would allow you to challenge that decision. Landlords will still be able to increase rents, but an independent tribunal - or, a group of people that make decisions - will make a judgement on this if they need to.

- **Introduce a new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman.**

An Ombudsman is a person who investigates and resolves complaints in an impartial way - they don't favour anybody, and they try to make

the most fair decision. Disputes between tenants and landlords will be settled by them, making sure no unfair treatment takes place.

- **Create a Private Rented Sector Database.**

This database is designed to help landlords fully understand their legal responsibilities and carry them out properly. It will give better information to tenants so they can make informed decisions before entering into an agreement with a landlord. It will also support local councils and help them focus use of this database where it is most needed (where landlords aren't doing enough).

- **Give tenants stronger rights to request pets in properties.**

The landlord has to consider these requests and can't deny them without a good reason. Landlords will be able to ask for pet insurance payments to cover any potential damage to the property.



- **Apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector.**

This bill will give renters safer, better value homes. It wants to try and lower the dangerous impacts of low-quality housing.

- **Apply 'Awaab's Law' to the sector.**

Awaab's Law is named after Awaab Ishak, who passed away at 2 years old from complications with mould in the home. This bill requires landlords to try and fix damp, mould, and similar problems in properties. It will give tenants clear expectations about how long it'll take to address their issues, especially when they're seriously dangerous.

- **Make it illegal for landlords to discriminate against potential tenants who receive benefits or have children.**

Everyone should be treated fairly when looking for a property, regardless of their circumstances - this bill will try to make sure of that.

- **End 'rental bidding' by stopping landlords from asking for or accepting offers above the advertised rent.**

Landlords and agents will have to publish an asking rent for the property - it will be illegal to accept offers higher than that, making sure housing prices are fairer.

- **Strengthen local authority enforcement.**

They will give out more civil penalties (like fines) for unlawful behaviour by landlords or tenants.

- **Strengthen rent repayment orders.**

The maximum penalty for missing rent will double. If you miss a payment more than once, you will have to repay the maximum amount.

More Legal Protections

Security of Tenure

The UK has something called **Security of Tenure**. It's essentially a tenant's legal right to **stay in a property** after the lease ends, under the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act.

You have a right to stay in your property and request a new lease on similar terms. You can take it to court if your landlord doesn't grant you a new lease. In most circumstances, your landlord can't evict you without a court order.

Deposit Protection Scheme

There's also something called a **Deposit Protection Scheme**. Landlords have to protect your deposit. If the tenant meets the terms of their agreement, pays all their rent and bills, and doesn't damage the property, the **deposit has to be given back** to you within 10 days of the agreed date.

Illegal Fees

Landlords are not allowed to charge for tenancy-related fees, like...

- **Renewing your tenancy once your contract ends**
- **Administrative work**
- **Check out inspections**
- **Credit and immigration checks**
- **References**

***these fees are banned if your tenancy started on or after 1 June 2019.**

Before the new "Abolish Section 21" bill comes into effect, landlord can't give you a **Section 21 notice** if they've charged you a banned

fee (unless they refund your money).

Repairs and Maintenance

There are some things tenants are responsible for fixing, and some that landlords are responsible for.

Your landlord is responsible for...

- Mould or damp
- Bad insulation
- Broken doors or windows
- Leaking pipes
- Access problems
- Gas, water, or electrical problems
- Shared parts of the building
- Anti-social behaviour in your building

You (the tenant) are responsible for...

- Fixing small breakages, like a shower rail
- Changing light bulbs
- Fixing any damage they have caused to the property

If your issue is life-threatening or dangerous, you should contact your landlord's emergency request service. Landlords might give you a different contact number just for emergency use.

This can be found on your landlord's website, by searching for your landlord's emergency repairs number. It should be accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Discrimination and Harassment

Landlord harassment can take many forms, some more subtle than others. Here are some common examples.

1. **Frequent, unannounced visits and inspections**
2. **Turning off utilities intentionally**
3. **Changing locks without tenant consent**
4. **Bombarding tenants with excessive communication**
5. **Threatening eviction without due process (unlawfully, or without a possession order)**
6. **Entering a property without permission**
7. **Pressuring tenants to leave early**
8. **Deliberately neglecting property maintenance**
9. **Causing damage to property**
10. **Discriminatory or abusive behaviour, like targeting a tenant based on their race, gender, religion, or disability.**

Nobody deserves to feel intimidated or unsafe in their home.

As we've just run through, there are several legal protections in place (or about to be in place) in the UK that are designed to give tenants rights to fair treatment and safe housing. Being aware of your rights is really important to protect yourself against unlawful behaviour, but it's only the first step. If you or anyone you know finds yourself facing unfair treatment, there are steps you can take.

What to do if your rights are violated.

There are steps you can take, and support is available. If you find yourself in the middle of a housing problem, follow these steps.

Check your tenancy agreement. What does it actually say? Can you pinpoint what is being violated or ignored?

Communicate with your landlord. Write them a letter explaining your problem - here's a template. Keep copies of all your communication.

Contact tenant support groups. There are free resources that can help you - Shelter, Acorn, and Citizens Advice.

Document everything. Keep a record of letters, emails, and phone calls. Take photos of any property damage.

Consider legal action. Escalate to a Housing Ombudsman, then seek legal aid or contact Citizens Advice. As a last resort, take the case to the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) or county court for enforcement.

Your next steps.

Run through these questions and check you know the answers to the best of your ability. Equipping yourself with the right information can make a huge difference to you or your friends if you happen to find yourself in a dispute in the future.

- **Do I know my rights as a tenant under local housing laws?**
- **Have I documented all communications and issues with my landlord?**
- **Have I tried resolving the issue through written communication?**
- **Are there tenant unions, legal aid services, or housing charities that can help?**
- **Do I have evidence (photos, emails, letters) to support my case if I need legal action?**
- **What is the best escalation path for my specific situation (e.g., mediation, official complaint, legal claim)?**

Action checklist.

- Review your lease agreement for the relevant clauses.**
- Document any violations or property damage with photos, dates, and written records.**
- Communicate with your landlord in writing (letters or emails), and keep a record of their responses.**
- Find your closest housing advocacy group or tenants' union - join them!**

Knowing your rights is the first step to protecting them. You deserve to live in a safe and happy home.

